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TO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 4493-4494
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 2414-2415
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 1039-1040
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 6425-6426
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 2447-2448
INFO RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0923-0924
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SECDEF FOR OSD MELISSA DALTON

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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: SUPPORT FOR THE LEBANESE ARMY

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraphs three through six.

SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Posts are requested to seek host government support for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and, specifically, to request funding for the purchase, upgrade, and transfer of 56 of Jordan's U.S.-origin M60A3 tanks to Lebanon.

OBJECTIVES

¶3. (SBU) Embassy Abu Dhabi is requested to pursue the following objectives:

-- Thank the UAE for its generous support of the LAF, including patrol boats, Gazelle helicopters, and \$17 million for the purchase and refurbishment of the first 10 of 66 total M60A3s from Jordan, which arrived in Lebanon on April 28.

-- Relay strong USG support for the transfer, which we understand from the LAF that the UAE is considering, of Puma helicopters and Hawk aircraft from the UAE to Lebanon.

-- Note that we have been unable to secure any of the \$98 million required to purchase, upgrade, and transport the remaining 56 M60A3s from Jordan to Lebanon, and would be most grateful for any further assistance from the UAE.

-- Note that we are making a similar request of Kuwait, KSA, and Qatar and would welcome UAE support in encouraging Gulf neighbors to follow the UAE example of support for the national institutions of Lebanon.

-- Explain that, despite our strong support for the M60A3 transfer and our provision of over half a billion dollars in assistance to the LAF since 2005, U.S. law prevents us from funding the retransfer of U.S.-origin equipment such as the tanks.

-- Assure the UAE we will coordinate a public affairs strategy among the UAE, Lebanon, and Jordan regarding provision and funding of the tanks.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy Doha is requested to pursue the following objectives:

-- Note that since 2005, the USG has provided more than half a billion dollars in support to the LAF.

-- Note also that several of Qatar's neighbors have provided significant assistance, but that we are aware of no Qatari aid to the LAF.

-- Suggest Qatar consider contributing to the \$98 million required to purchase, upgrade, and transport the remaining 56 of 66 M60A3s from Jordan to Lebanon as a gesture of both concrete Qatari support for the LAF and moderation in Lebanon, as well as a sign of Qatari-U.S. cooperation on an issue of mutual concern.

-- Explain that U.S. law prevents us from funding the retransfer of U.S.-origin equipment such as the M60A3s, and that we are also requesting assistance from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE.

¶5. (SBU) Embassy Kuwait is requested to pursue the following objective:

-- Seek a response to Secretary of Defense Gates' March 2 letter to Kuwaiti Minister of Defense al-Sabah seeking Kuwaiti funding for the purchase, upgrade, and transport of the remaining 56 of 66 M60A3s from Jordan to Lebanon.

-- Reiterate our request that Kuwait provide some or all of the \$98 million required for the remaining tanks.

¶6. (SBU) Embassy Riyadh is requested to pursue the following objectives:

-- Thank Saudi Arabia for its generous financial and political support to Lebanon, including to the LAF.

-- Note our understanding as of late 2008 that Saudi Arabia is not inclined to provide further financial support to the LAF.

-- Underscore that supporting the LAF remains a top priority for the Obama administration, and in 2009 alone, we anticipate providing over \$200 million in funding, bringing our total assistance to the LAF since 2005 to more than half a billion dollars.

-- Request that Saudi Arabia reconsider the USG and LAF request for \$98 million to fund the purchase, upgrade, and transport of the remaining 56 M60A3s from Jordan to Lebanon.

-- Note that the UAE funded the first 10 tanks, which were delivered to Lebanon on April 28, and that U.S. law prevents us from funding the retransfer of U.S.-origin equipment such as the M60A3s.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶7. (SBU) Posts are requested to report the results of this demarche to NEA Lebanon Desk Officer Christine Lawson and NEA/ARP by Friday, July 17.

BACKGROUND

¶8. (SBU) On January 14, 2009, the LAF and Jordan signed an agreement to refurbish, upgrade, and transfer to Lebanon 66 of Jordan's U.S.-origin M60A3 tanks, with a package price of \$115 million. The USG is prohibited by law from funding the retransfer of U.S.-origin equipment such as the LAF-Jordanian deal, but has lent strong political backing to the transaction, and is working to drum up donor funding and to encourage further

military-to-military cooperation between Lebanon and Jordan.

¶9. (SBU) The UAE provided \$17 million for the first ten tanks, which were delivered on April 28. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were both approached for funding on multiple occasions in late 2008 and early 2009. Saudi Arabia, which provided \$100 million to the LAF during the Nahr al-Barid crisis of 2007, was uninterested at the time in providing additional support. Kuwait has yet to respond to a letter from Secretary of Defense Gates requesting funding for the tanks. We have not approached Qatar to seek funding for the tanks, but view this request as an opportunity to work with Qatar on an issue of mutual concern.

¶10. (SBU) Support for the LAF is an urgent priority after the March 14 coalition's win in Lebanon's June 7 parliamentary elections. The LAF's already urgent need for more training and equipment is heightened by the new political mandate to continue consolidating the state's control over Lebanese territory. PM-designate Saad Hariri is already seeking a "Marshall plan" of aid for the LAF to chip away at Hizballah's legitimacy and prepare the army to confront other armed groups. We support his plan and will continue efforts to strengthen Lebanese government institutions, especially its security services, as the best means to protect Lebanon's sovereignty and security.
CLINTON